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AN EVALUATION OF MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION BOTTLENECKS OF NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY'S PRODUCTS: A CASE OF IKEJA, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to evaluate the marketing and distribution bottlenecks concerning the products of the Nigerian Bottling Company Ikeja, Lagos State. Purposive and Simple Random Sampling Techniques were adopted for this study. The Ikeja facility of a Nigerian bottling company was purposefully chosen, and distribution personnel in the company were chosen at random. Workers from the sampled company, logistics drivers, distributors, and customers were also questioned about the marketing and distribution issues faced by the bottling company in Lagos State. A total of 196 respondents were chosen at random from the company's 4,800 employees, logistics drivers, distributors, and customers. A total of 186 questionnaires were issued to the respondents, with 180 of them being returned. The key marketing and distribution challenges by the bottled products company in Lagos were ranked using the Relative Importance Index (RII). The most highlighted problems were improving the company's financial strength (R.I.I = 0.881), poor delivery time (R.I.I = 0.864), high price of items (R.I.I = 0.808), consumers' location (R.I.I = 0.777), and the business climate (R.I.I = 0.764). Furthermore, the results revealed that a lack of depots (R.I.I= 0.761); road deterioration (R.I.I= 0.702); competitive practices (R.I.I= 0.544); product size and vehicle utilised (R.I.I= 0.503); and government policies (R.I.I= 0.429) had the lowest ranking. As a result, the study advised that decisions affecting the company's financial strength be given the greatest weight. The bottling company should enhance delivery efficiency, and the government should look at the city's traffic congestion, while providing a conducive environment for businesses to thrive in Lagos State. The prices of the products should be examined, and the government's policies should be consistent.

Keywords: Marketing, Distribution, Bottling, Company, Products

1.0 Introduction

Bottling companies in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria is yet to completely realise their market optimum due to a number of problems. Most product-oriented enterprises in Nigeria have failed in meeting the demands and needs of their customers due to their marketing policies. Bottling businesses' marketing strategies and practices in Nigeria are woefully inadequate in addressing the country's major objectives and ensuring consumer pleasure, and efforts to correct the flaws have gone undocumented. Since 1982, when it peaked at 7.83 percent, the manufacturing industry's contribution to Nigeria's overall economic output has usually decreased. The ongoing volatility in the sector share's contribution over time has been attributed to a variety of factors. Many of them illustrate the manufacturing industry's vulnerability to global economic pressures, and policy changes have the potential to restructure the sector (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

Most businesses in Nigeria were inefficient and non-export focused, forcing competing businesses to shift their factories to other countries, notably Ghana. Nonetheless, a few businesses, such as drinks, cement, textiles, and tobacco, keep the manufacturing sector afloat, despite the fact that many of them are currently operating below capacity. Today, the majority of manufacturing, particularly soft-drinks manufacture, is concentrated in urban areas such as Aba, Abuja, Benin, Enugu, Ibadan, Ilorin, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos and Port Harcourt among others (Sunday and Ayuba, 2017).

The key marketing strategy determinants are the company's performance and distribution: By implementing marketing tactics, Nigerian bottling companies can achieve growth and advancement. In management research, among the significant variables to determine the performance of a company is the success story. Assessing marketing success is becoming more important, but it is also one of the most difficult duties of the management and other company stakeholders. This problem is evident, because the performance of the market is mostly determined by external and internal performance indicators, as well as largely uncontrollable entities like customers and competitors (Clark, 2000).

Nigerian soft drink manufacturers, in particular, have adopted a variety of marketing methods in order to obtain an advantage and stay relevant over their competitors and in the sector. Most soft-drinks producers in this area suffer a slew of issues, including very low market share, poor patronage and low very profit margins. Others obstacles to these companies' success are very low returns on assets and on investment, as well as fierce competition even from the overseas competitors.

Physical distribution is also very important because of its impact on consumer satisfaction. This is defined as a system of interconnected strategies that allow for effective transfer of items, whether they are industrial or non-industrial (Odugbemi and

Ajiboye 1998; Abdul-Azeez, Aworemi and Ajiboye 2009; Ajiboye and Afolayan, 2009). According to several scholars (Sanchhez and Ricart, 2010; Ajiboye, 2011), the most prominent trait of a purchase is on innovative distribution techniques rather than where and when the purchased can be made.

By being more handy or available than other operators, a company can capture sales from competitors using innovative distribution tactics (Oladun, 2012). The catalytic influence of the transportation sector, frequently called the socio-economic growth engine, was examined by Ogunsanya (2000), who stated that it cannot be overemphasised. Despite the net value of N5,000 billion of the roads, the fast worsening and unacceptable state of these roads in Nigeria, especially the Trunk A/ Federal roads has resulted in an annual loss of N80 billion.

Osuagwu (2002) and Bowersox and Closs (2000) see distribution as the third part of the marketing mix that encompasses every technique adopted and decisions taken in relating to the prompt accessibility of products and services to the customers. Ajiboye and Ayantoyinbo (2009) looked at the transportation and distribution issues that come with selling agricultural products in Sub-Saharan Africa. They came to the conclusion that unless a product is delivered to end-users on time, in acceptable shape, and at a reasonable price, consumers will demand additional products until the producer can breathe a sigh of relief that the product has been accepted.

Akinyele (2010) examined the role of marketing strategic in the oil and gas industry's performance in Nigeria. In a dynamic context, strategic marketing is a driver of organisational setting while improving new product and service growth for existing markets. Nashwan (2015) looked at how marketing strategy influences firm performance through distribution, pricing, product standardisation, promotion and how strategy marketing adaption influence customer, financial performance and sales.

Okafor and Nnanna (2018), on the other hand, used LINGO to investigate the influence of optimisation on the Nigerian Bottling Company PLC's distribution network. Earlier research using data from developed and emerging countries revealed significant variations and similarities between indigenous and international enterprises in terms of manufacturing distribution strategies.

International enterprises outperform their domestic counterparts in practically every area, according to empirical evidence; nevertheless, the intervening impacts of innovative distribution have not been reported (Stevenson, 2000; Holt, 2005). Despite the fact that distribution is vital in the efficiency of both the local and international enterprises, many local and international enterprises do not fully understand this in practice as many distribution techniques are frequently plagued by issues. As a result, the aim of this study is to assess the marketing issues in the distribution of bottled products produced by the Nigerian Bottling Company's Ikeja facility in Lagos State.

The paper is organised so that part two of the paper is devoted to the concept of marketing, which is logically followed by the review of literature in section three and methodology in section four, which covers the study region, population, sampling, questionnaire design and questionnaire administration. The data was analysed and discussed in section five while the conclusion was reached and recommendations were presented in section six.

2.0 Concept of Marketing

According to Kotler and Amstrong (2001), there are five competing concepts under which businesses can conduct their marketing operations. Production, product, selling, societal, and marketing are the concepts involved. The marketing concept entails analysing the demands of their clients and focusing on meeting those wants before their competition. The marketing concept has been embraced all throughout the world, yet it is woefully inadequate in Nigeria.

The following principles illustrate the marketing notion of selling products that are not up to international standards in the Nigerian market. In Nigeria, the production notion is that a company focuses on products produced by competitors rather than products that it could manufacture more effectively. This results in a surplus of high-cost goods, resulting in low demand for those goods. Before manufacturing a product, companies failed to ask several crucial questions. In most cases, the production strategy failed in developing countries because the firm's items were largely unneeded at a time when unmet demand was great. Virtually nothing could be sold swiftly by salespeople whose job it was to complete business transactions at a rate set by production costs (Akinyele, 2010, Sunday and Ayuba, 2017).

On the sales concept in Nigeria, mass production of products has become ordinary, the competition among producers had increased while there is enough unfulfilled demand (Nnabuko, 2016). Many firms have been producing products without paying little attention to whether the product was needed or not. Hoewever, since it has been produced; the goal was to beat the competitors to the sale by persuading customers to buy them through advertising and personal selling with little regard to customer satisfaction (Nnabuko, 2016). The marketing of the products produced is the next step after production. People may connect marketing with high-pressure sales tactics.

In Nigeria, the marketing concept expands items, and direct and persuasive selling is not the order of the day in producing the needed sales since customers could be picky with their purchases, buying only those things that precisely fit their shifting demands, which were not always obvious (Nnabuko, 2016). Furthermore, the firms' failure to adopt the marketing concept in Nigeria, which has to do with the focus on the needs of the customers before the product is developed which also aligned with all the company's functions and obtaining profit through satisfying the customer needs successfully over a long period of time which is in response to the discerning customers (Akinyele, 2010, Ajiboye, 2011, Sunday and Ayuba, 2017).

When a company adopts the marketing concept, it usually creates separate marketing departments whose goal is to meet customer wants. This is because the primary aim of any business is to meet up the demands of the customers while also making a profit, companies must concentrate on the consumer by exposing its marketing challenge. Rather than fighting for private pockets, each employee should be concerned with client happiness.

Marketing research is often used to resolve the market categorisation vis-à-vis their size, and their needs (Ayuba & Kazeem, 2015). In meeting these needs, the professional marketing team takes decisions regarding the controllable elements, which has not been fully utilised in Nigeria in order to create the ideal marketing environment.

The marketing concept is the foundation of the societal concept. It promotes a concern for the well-being of society as a whole. It is ethical for a factory to open with noisy equipment that pollute the environment, especially in Nigerian cities, with no recompense for the losses caused to individuals and society during production.

Today, host communities in Nigeria protest the absence of proper remuneration for the usage of their God-given resources.

3.0 Review of Literature

Among the major company in food and beverage industry in Nigeria with a high consumer base of about 160 million and high market presence is the Nigerian Bottling Company Plc (Onyema, 2012). It is therefore expected that the company must have an adequately planned distribution network so as to ensure that the shareholders get the best return on their investment and that costs are kept as low as possible so as to allow for development and growth of busines.

Maintaining money flow in the distribution system provides all participating enterprises with adequate financial motive. This entails comprehending the profit incentives, required investments, and return on investment (both in terms of money and time) for the distribution process of each company. Technology, according to Ilori and Aju (2000), is an all-pervasive phenomenon that affects everyone because it deals with the interaction of science and society. It comprises of these elements namely culture, knowledge, natural endowment, politics, resourcefulness, the environment and others.

Developing countries, on the other hand, consider enhancing rural indigenous technology as a higher priority, as it will provide jobs, provide food for rising people, and ultimately enhance living conditions. However, there are situations when a developing country will embrace modern technology since it is seen as progressive. As a result, many developing countries have been compelled to buy new high-tech equipment irrespective of its operational and maintenance costs or the peace of used (Ogbonna, 2019).

Business Process Management (BPM) is a management technique that aligns the operations of an organization and customers' needs. This consists of confirming that the specified business process is being followed and that the desired outcomes are being met (Oyemakinwa, 2017). The business process model's goal is to provide a noticeable picture of the process flow of an organisation so as to increase the quality of value delivered to customers and lower company costs (both operating, financing, and incidence).

According to Duncan (2005), marketing is critical in marketing exchange process, which communicates with the present and potential clients including the general public. Every business should assume the role of communicator and promoter. Marketing strategic is seen as a driver of organisational positioning in an environment that is dynamic and it also helps in the development of new products/services for markets according to research conducted by Akinyele (2010) on the importance of strategic marketing to the performance of enterprise in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria.

Hassan, Qureshi, Sharif and Mukhtar (2013) conducted a study on the effect of strategy marketing originality on organisational performance vis-a-vis strategy marketing implementation effectiveness among the Pakistani businesses. Due to the failing economy and changing customer buying patterns due to increased health concern, the manufacturing industry faces these issues.

As a result, marketing is an important part of the industry chain for generating demand and building consumer loyalty. Due to reduced advertising directed at youngsters, the introduction of new media kinds, and updating messages for customers seeking extra nutritious alternatives, the manufacturing industry has undergone numerous alterations in recent years (Public Health Law & Policy, 2011). Physical distribution ensures that the correct products are available to purchasers at the right location, price and time (Ajiboye and Ayantoyinbo, 2009, Ajiboye and Afolayan, 2009, Ajiboye, 2011). To complete marketing, there must be an exchange of ownership and title to a product that has changed hands several times, and the products must be transported, but not necessarily in the same order as the ownership flow.

The Nigerian Bottling Company's sales section is primarily responsible for the physical flow of distribution. To put it another way, the sales and transportation departments are merged into the sales department in order to maintain distribution ties and ensure that the distribution network is functional and efficient. Successful and growing businesses are known for their capability to accomplish strategy marketing choice possibilities as well as their well-conceived marketing strategies or how well the company will compete with other competitors (Black and Boal, 1994). According to Ukwueze (2007), the marketing institutional structure is made up of disparate pieces that may be physically identified.

Producers, customers, and middlemen, for example. The Nigerian Bottling Company's products are transported to distributors in a strategic location where customers can quickly discover them, buy big quantities, and cut transportation expenses. The Nigerian Bottling Company's physical distribution policy is to distribute her products in bulk to their major distributors which varies depending on the size and number of trailers and trucks in use.

4.0 Methodology

The research was done in Lagos Metropolitan, a megacity in Nigeria's south western region. Lagos is located between longitude 20.42'E and 32.2' and between latitude 60.22'N and 60.2'N (Lagos State Government Official Website, 2022). Lagos state is the second-most populous state in Nigeria. (National Population Commission, 2006). Lagos is noted for being Nigeria's economic center (Fadare & Ayantoyinbo, 2010). The researchers undertook their survey from August to December 2021, which are the months when logistics operations are at their peak and harmattan sessions are held, as well as the months when drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, are drunk in large quantities.

The data for this study was gathered from the respondents via structured questionnaire. Because of its connection to business activity, one (1) commercial market, namely Idumota, was purposefully sampled. However, the Nigerian Bottling Company Ikeja, which was purposefully chosen, was one bottling company of concern in this investigation. According to Nigerian Bottling Company Limited, the company employs roughly 4,800 people (2019). With 25 logistics drivers, 25 distributors, and 50 clients, 2% of the company's entire population was used as a sampling size. A total of 196 respondents were asked to participate in the survey.

The study relied on primary data gathered from the respondents through Questionnaire and annual reports of the company using the data to evaluate the marketing and distribution bottlenecks of Nigerian Bottling Company's products in Lagos State, Nigeria. One hundred and eighty (180) of the 196 respondents were retrieved (91.8 percent were deemed to be analysable), whereas only 8.2 percent were unable to be retrieved. For a better understanding, the data was analysed using the Relative Importance Index (RII). Hence, the equation for the Relative Importance Index (RII) expressed;

$$R.I.I. = (5n_1 + 4n_2 + 3n_3 + 2n_4 + n_5)$$

$$5N$$

$$0 \leq (R.I.I.) \geq 1$$

Where:

n_1 = *Number of Respondent for* strongly agreed

n_2 = *Number of repondent for* agreed

n_3 = *Number of respondent for* indifferent

n_4 - *Number of respondent for* disagreed

n_5 = *Number of respondent for* strongly disagreed

N = Total number of respondents for each cause

5.0 Findings and Discussion

The data suggest that the most significant marketing problems impeding the distribution of Nigerian Bottling Company's products in Lagos State are a lack of financial strength (RII = 0.881; Rank = 1). The inference is that a lack of financial power has hampered marketing improvements in the distribution of Nigerian bottling firm products in Lagos. Financial strength is not only an useful sign of a company's health, but it also serves as a critical tool for managing growth. The bottling company will discontinue its market evolution due to a lack of financial strength.

Table 1: Bottlenecks facing the marketing and distribution of Nigerian Bottling company's products in Lagos State.

S/N	Ranking the Bottlenecks Facing the distribution of Nigerian Bottling Company's products according to their importance.	n_1	n_2	n_3	n_4	n_5	N	RI I	Rank
1	Inadequate Depots	62	59	13	41	18	180	0.761	6
2	Road Deterioration -	51	72	6	20	31	180	0.702	7
3	Delivery time	93	71	2	9	5	180	0.864	2
4	Size of the products and vehicle used	28	22	11	73	46	180	0.503	9
5	Business environment	67	63	9	35	4	178	0.764	5
6	Competitive practices	41	22	0	80	37	180	0.544	8
7	Price of the goods	79	64	9	13	14	179	0.808	3
8	Consumer's location	83	55	2	18	22	180	0.777	4
9	Government policies	23	15	5	59	78	180	0.429	10
10	Poor company's financial strength	107	56	2	11	6	180	0.881	1

Source: Authors' Data Analysis (2022)

Poor delivery time (R.I.I =0.864; Rank =2), high goods price (R.I.I = 0.808; Rank =3), consumers' location (R.I.I = 0.777; Rank= 4), and business environment (R.I.I= 0.764; Rank= 5) were ranked second, third, fourth, and fifth, respectively.Due to traffic congestion in Lagos, exact delivery times of products to ultimate consumers are unavailable, resulting in considerable urban transportation externalities. The implication is that it decreases consumer loyalty while also lengthening lead times.

The high cost of goods also hampered the bottling company's marketing efforts in Lagos State, implying that few buyers would be prepared to pay such a high price for a product. The product's high price will deter buyers from purchasing it.

The business environment, according to Mwanja and Nyandat (2013), is defined as forces or surroundings that influence business activities. For the enterprises who operate in Lagos, the climate is a threat rather than an opportunity for new business chances. Sale promotions, price cuts, and incentives, on the other hand, would be required to keep existing consumers and attract new ones.

Inadequate depots (R.I.I= 0.761; Rank= 6); road deterioration (R.I.I= 0.702; Rank= 7); competitive practices (R.I.I= 0.544; Rank= 8); size of the items and vehicle utilized (R.I.I= 0.503; Rank= 9) and government policies (R.I.I= 0.429; Rank= 10) are other bottlenecks working against Nigerian Bottling Company.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

With ten (10) variables, the study identified and ranked several marketing issues affecting the distribution of Nigerian Bottling Company's products in Lagos. The findings reveal that in order for Nigerian bottling companies to overcome marketing obstacles and distribute bottled products, financial considerations should be given top priority. The bottling company could increase delivery efficiency for effectiveness and time restrictions, and the government should look into the issue of traffic congestion in the metropolis, while providing an enabling climate for businesses to thrive in Lagos State. The prices of the products should be examined, and the government's policies should be consistent. Depots should be located in key locations where they are needed, and routes for logistical activities should be upgraded.

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